



## Under Attack:

## April is Invasive Plant Pest and Disease Awareness Month

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**Contact:** Donna Gilson  
608-224-5130, [donna.gilson@wi.gov](mailto:donna.gilson@wi.gov)  
Jim Dick, Communications Director  
608-224-5020, [jim.dick@wi.gov](mailto:jim.dick@wi.gov)

MADISON – We are all waiting eagerly for spring to come and stay for more than a few days, but remember what comes along with warm sunny days and gentle rains – plant pests and diseases.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has declared April to be Invasive Plant Pest and Disease Awareness Month and is using the occasion to update its [Hungry Pests](http://hungrypests.com) campaign online to engage the public in the battle.

"We depend on the public to be our eyes in the field, helping our staff keep a look out for plant pests and diseases that can cause millions of dollars in treatment costs and crop losses," says Brian Kuhn, who leads the Bureau of Plant Industry in the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP). The bureau is in charge of monitoring for and responding to plant pests and diseases in the state. Kuhn's group works closely with the USDA, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and University of Wisconsin-Extension.

"This is a time of year when we see a rising risk of people carrying pests and diseases to new places, because they're heading out for camping trips or to their cabins," Kuhn says. "And we're coming up to moving season, with families moving to new homes between school years, and students moving back and forth between college towns and hometowns. We just want people to be aware when they pack that pests could be hiding."

Here are five ways you can help:

**Buy local, burn local** Insects and their eggs can hide in firewood. So can fungi and micro-organisms that cause disease. Don't bring these problems to new places by hauling firewood from home to a campground, or back home from a campground.

**Plant carefully** Plants can carry insects or diseases in potting soil or on the roots, leaves or stems. Buy your plants from reputable sources. DATCP licenses and inspects nursery growers and dealers that sell at least \$250 worth of plants a year. You can find up-to-date lists of these businesses at [datcp.wi.gov/plants](http://datcp.wi.gov/plants) under "nursery stock."

**Be careful with edible gifts and souvenirs** Don't bring, take or mail fresh fruits, vegetables, or plants into or out of Wisconsin unless they've been inspected. When you return from international travel, don't bring any fresh foods, and declare all food and agricultural items to customs officials.

**Work with us** Follow quarantine restrictions and allow state or federal employees on your property for pest and disease surveys.

**Arm yourself with knowledge** Learn about pests and how to identify them by visiting [hungrypests.com](http://hungrypests.com), [Wisconsin Pest Bulletin](http://WisconsinPestBulletin.com), or [datcp.wi.gov/plants/insects](http://datcp.wi.gov/plants/insects). If you think you've found a pest, report it.



MORE

## PESTS – ADD ONE

"Most people in Wisconsin are probably aware that we have gypsy moth and emerald ash borer in our forests, parks and backyards. But they need to also be aware that we have these insects because humans brought them here without realizing what they were doing," Kuhn says. "You need to understand that by taking just a few minutes to check camping equipment or spending a few dollars for firewood at campgrounds, you can save our lumber industry, nurseries, farmers and other businesses a lot of money. That translates to jobs and tax dollars that pay for things like schools and roads and emergency services."

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### ***Common and not-so-common pests***

Most of us know about Wisconsin's two most notorious invasive insect pests – gypsy moth and emerald ash borer. But there are many more. Here's a sampler:

- **European corn borer** has been on the plant industry bureau's radar since 1942. Corn borer causes reduced yields, broken stalks and dropped ears. It remains one of the major pests of corn. The plant industry bureau still surveys for it every year – and finds it.
- **Soybean cyst nematodes**, tiny worm-like soil dwellers, were introduced on cabbage transplants in Kenosha County about 35 years ago. Today they have been confirmed in more than 90 percent of the state's soybean acreage, costing soybean growers about \$10 million a year in yield loss.
- **Late blight**, the fungal disease that caused the Irish potato famine, threatens our valuable potato crop and can creep into home gardens as well.
- Our Christmas tree growers have seen losses from **Phytophthora root rot** disease, posing a risk to an industry worth nearly \$12 million annually in Wisconsin.
- **Japanese beetles** are the bane of gardeners and homeowners in much of southern Wisconsin, devouring leaves, flowers and fruit and destroying sod.